

# Washington in War Time.

## THE PRESIDENT IN BATTLE.

Fort Stevens, Where Lincoln Was Under Fire.

BY WILLIAM VAN ZANT COX,  
Author of the "Defenses of Washington."

Three times during the civil war Washington was in grave peril and three times it was saved to the Union.

The first was at the beginning of hostilities when the militia of the District of Columbia came to the rescue of the small body of marines and artillery, before the arrival in the Capital of the troops from Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New York and other Northern States. The attack was immediately after the battle of Bull Run (July 21, 1861), when it could have been captured by the Confederates had they not been more demoralized by victory than the Federals by defeat. The third was in July, 1864, when Gen. Early made his campaign against Washington.

THE IMPORTANT BATTLE AT MONOCACY, Md., on July 9, 1864, was the first day's fight to save the Nation's Capital, and Gen. Early's army was victorious. So unexpected and so rapid were the Confederate General's movements that he was in sight of the dome of the Capitol before his cleverly-conceived plans were fully realized. When the roar of Early's guns was heard and the telegraph announced that he had defeated Gen. Lew Wallace at Monocacy Bridge, the heart of the North quivered with emotion as it contemplated the defenselessness of Washington, stripped of men and guns for the campaign against Richmond.

This daring campaign against Washington and its skillful execution ended a rude awakening in the North, impatiently waiting for Grant to take Richmond. Both Washington and Baltimore were in a state of panic, while gold went up to the highest point in the history of the war. A most serious nature, with foreign powers awaiting only for a plausible pretext for disinvestment. Never was a truce attempted to the Confederates. Never was there a time when more was at stake for the Union.

"Wallace defeated at Monocacy after a stubborn fight," were the words contained in the message received at the War Department, but that stubborn fight was as valuable as a victory for the Union, for a day's time had been gained, so necessary for the safety of the Capital.

During those exciting days there was one calm man, and he was none other than President Lincoln. He was then living at the Soldiers' Home, a mile and a quarter from Fort Stevens, and in addition to his herculean duties he daily visited the camps, forts and hospitals. He seemed to be everywhere, and his chief concern was at that time the capture of Early's army. His telegram to Gov. Swann, of Maryland, is characteristic: "Let us be vigilant, let us keep cool."

Gen. C. C. Augur was in command of the Department of Washington. Gen. Alexander McDowell had charge of the military line of troops and fortifications. The latter was ordered to establish a camp on Piney Branch Creek, but the news from the front was so disquieting that he proceeded to Fort Stevens, five miles north of Pennsylvania avenue, to the Seventh street pike, and took command of a line he had never before seen.

Every man was utilized for defense. The hospitals were drawn on for convalescents, the Quartermaster's Department for employees, the National Guard of Ohio, the District of Columbia Militia, the veteran Reserves, and the untrained Regular detachments and unmounted cavalry, sailors, firemen, and citizens were in the trenches and on picket line.

When Gen. Grant realized the gravity of the situation, he sent Hunter, who could render no assistance, he first thought of returning from Petersburg to Washington to take command in person. On reflection, however, he decided to send the Sixth Corps, commanded by Gen. Horatio G. Wright.

The 25th N. Y. Cav., which left City Point, Va., on July 7, was ordered to have the first regiment to reach Washington from the James, and went into camp about midnight of July 10, near Fort Stevens. On the same day the First and Second Divisions of the Sixth Corps left City Point for Washington. A few hours later, Gen. W. H. Emory, with a part of the Nineteenth Corps, just returning from New Orleans, and the Twenty-third Corps, just returning from the James, were ordered to move for Washington without disembarment from their ocean transports.

THE RACE FOR THE CAPITAL. What a picture! Early with his fighting legions advancing on the Capital from the North, while the veterans of the Sixth and Second Corps, the Twenty-third and the Seventh, were hurrying to the rescue by the way from the James River and the Gulf of Mexico to save the Capital they loved so well. North and South looked on with bated breath, and the eyes of the world were turned to the Capital in this race of armies, would reach Washington first.

On the morning of July 11, Gen. Early left his camp near Rockville, Md., and was taking the Georgetown pike, the highway preceded and flanked by cavalry taking the Seventh street pike. Maj. Frye, of Lowell's cavalry, met the enemy's cavalry picket line near the old Stone Tavern before noon and forced them back on their reserves. He, in turn, was driven back by the enemy, who sent four shots from a battery of light artillery.

About 11 o'clock, the Signal officer at Fort Reno, observed

CLOUDS OF DUST AND ARMY wagons moving up the Seventh street pike. About the same time a message from Capt. Berry, 8th U. S. Inf., reported that the enemy with artillery, cavalry, and infantry was moving in the direction of Silver Spring. Gen. McCook ordered the picket line to extend to the north, and the line slowly on approach of the enemy until within range of the guns of Fort Stevens, Slocum, and Delany's.

Shortly after noon, in advance with Roddey's division, consisting of Given's and Cox's North Carolinians, Crook's Georgians, and Battle's Alabamians, in full view of Fort Stevens, and found it feebly manned, as had been reported to him. Smith, of Imboden's Cavalry, according to Early, drove a small body of Union cavalry before him into the works.

No time could be lost, and he ordered the tired and dusty veterans to move forward, but before his order could be executed, to his everlasting regret, he saw trained and disciplined troops move out of the works, deploy, and form a skirmish line.

Undismayed and undaunted, the tireless Early and his brave men continued to advance, but with greater caution than before. It was the last day of the war, and the ambitions of only an hour ago could never be realized. Washington was saved to the Union!

THE SIXTH CORPS HAD ARRIVED! Never was there a more opportune movement, never was there a more welcome arrival. Down the historic James, up the historic Potomac, came the Sixth Corps. Mr. Lincoln met them at the Seventh street Wharf and well they cheered him! With what alacrity both officers and men marched to reinforce the brave defenders on the firing line! Dr. George Stevens, the historian of the Sixth Army Corps, says:

"We marched up Seventh street, meeting on our way many old friends, and hearing those who crowded on the sidewalks, exclaiming, 'The old Sixth Corps! These men are the men who took May's Heights! The danger is over!'"

William E. Leach, Co. K, 150th Ohio, was the first man wounded on picket duty and died shortly afterward. See War of the Rebellion, Sec. 1, Vol. 37, p. 245.

now! Washington, an hour before, was in a panic; but as the people saw the veterans wearing the badge of the Greek cross marching through their streets, the excitement subsided and confidence prevailed.

"Thus we made our way to the north of the city, the sound of cannoning in our front stimulating and hastening the steps of the men."

"Families with a few of their choicest articles of household furniture loaded into wagons, were hastening to the city, reporting that their houses were burned, or that they had made their escape, leaving the greater part of their goods to the mercy of the rebels."

"While on the march to Fort Stevens, was passed by Gen. Wright, and received his verbal instructions. A mass near Crystal Spring in the neighborhood of Fort Stevens, where we arrived at 4 o'clock in the afternoon."

At 5 p. m., the force outside of Fort Stevens, consisting of portions of the Veteran Reserve Corps, War Department clerks, and citizen volunteers, was driven

in toward the fort by a portion of the enemy's forces under Early. At the same time it was ordered to move 500 men of my brigade out to recover the line held in the afternoon. This was successfully accomplished before 7 o'clock by the 38th Pa., Col. J. P. Baller; the 102d Pa., Maj. William H. Smith; and the 130th Pa., Capt. James McGreggor, which deployed as skirmishers and drove the enemy's advance back to their main lines. The position was strengthened at dark by the 134th N. Y., Lieut.-Col. T. B. Hamilton, and extended from a point opposite the center of the front and strengthened by batteries to the west and a point opposite Fort Slocum on the east, a distance of about two miles. Skirmishing continued through the night.

ON THE VAIN ALL THE AFTERNOON. On July 11 Early tried to find a weak spot in the lines, but he was met everywhere by the fire of fort guns and musketry. The works he reported exceedingly strong, consisting of what appeared to be impenetrable lines of trenches, and a line of lower works in front of each, pierced for an immense number of guns, the whole being connected by curtains, wire, ditches and other fortifications. The timber had been felled with in cannon range all around and left on the ground, making a formidable obstacle, and every possible approach was taken by artillery. On the right was Rock Creek running through a deep ravine, which had been rendered impassable by the felling of the trees on each side, and the ground was worked on the Georgetown pike which had been reported to be the strongest of all. On the left as far as the eye could reach the works appeared to be of the same impenetrable character.

Early then held a consultation with his Generals—Breckinridge, Roddey, Ramseur and Gordon—pointing out the necessity of capturing the fort before the morning. The passes were closed against them, and in concluding he announced his purpose of making an assault at daylight. When on the morning of July 12, Gen. Early saw the parapets lined with troops, he says that he then determined to

ABANDON THE IDEA OF CAPTURING WASHINGTON.

A distinguished writer who was at Brightwood during the siege says:

"July 12 came bright and glorious. The first brigade of our Second Division and our sharpshooters were on picket in front of Fort Stevens. The line of pickets which could be seen the lines of rebel skirmishers, from whose rifles the white puffs of smoke rose as they discharged their guns, and our pickets. The valley below presented a scene of surprising loveliness, with the rich green meadows, its fields of waving corn, its orchards and its groves."

The principal force of the enemy seemed to be in front of Fort Stevens; and it was determined to give them battle.

About 5 o'clock in the afternoon Gen. Wright ordered Gen. Wheaton to drive back the Confederate skirmish line and occupy the wooded points near the road, which, being so near our intrenchments, gave the enemy advantage of position; thereupon, Col. Bidwell was instructed to have the Third Brigade move outside of the fort and under cover of the hills and woods (southeast of Battle Ground Cemetery) in two lines directly in the rear of the First Brigade, on the skirmish line.

Three of his best regiments to select the remaining portion of the brigade to be held to support the general movement.

"According to Gen. Wheaton, the 7th Me., the 43d N. Y., and 4th N. Y. were skillfully placed in position near the skirmish line under the direction of Col. Bidwell without the enemy discovering the movement."

"A PRECIPITANT SIGNAL was made by a staff officer, from Fort Stevens, when these regiments were in position, at which time the batteries from Fort Stevens and Slocum opened fire upon certain points held by the enemy. The assaulting regiments then dashed forward, surprising and hotly engaging the enemy, who was found to be much stronger than supposed. It became necessary to deploy immediately the three remaining regiments, the 7th N. Y., the 4th N. Y., and the 7th Me."

"At 4 p. m., Gen. Wright wired Gen. Augur from Fort Stevens: 'The head of my column has nearly reached the front.' It is said that Gen. Meigs instructed his Quartermaster's soldiers to make themselves as conspicuous as possible on the parapets."

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"Here on the top of this parapet, between this old enemy and the great army, place where President Lincoln stood when he was wounded by a minie ball, and the President not to expose his life to the bullets of the enemy."

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22d N. Y. and the 61st Pa.—Bidwell's Brigade on the right of those he had already in the action, and the picket reserve of 150 men from the 102d Pa., and a detachment of 80 men from the Vermont Brigade to support the skirmish line immediately on the right and left of the pike. The enemy's stubborn resistance showed that a farther advance than already made would require more troops, and two regiments were sent for. Before their arrival, however (the 37th Mass. and 2d R. I.), an Aid-de-Camp from Gen. Wright directed me not to attempt more than holding the position gained, as the object of the attack had been accomplished and the important points captured and held.

"The whole attack was as gallant as it was successful, and the troops never received more energy or determination. The losses were very severe, the brave Col. Bidwell losing many of his most valuable regimental commanders. The last shot was fired about 10 o'clock, and the remainder of the night was occupied strengthening the position, burying the dead, caring for the wounded, and relieving the skirmish line, which had been in action from 10 o'clock until 4 o'clock in the morning."

THE ATTACK. Dr. Stevens describes the attack in these words:

"The heavy ordnance in the fort sent volley after volley of 32-pound shells, howling over the heads of our men into the midst of the rebels and through the (Carberry) house, where so many of them

but he seemed oblivious to his surroundings; finally, when I found that my cartridges failed to make any impression on the enemy's ranks, I knew that I was commander of the United States, but I am a command here, and as you are not sure where you are, I am not sure where you are. Then he would persist in standing up and exposing his tall form."

That old parapet identified by Gen. Horatio G. Wright stands to-day, and for history's sake should be preserved in memory of Lincoln as a tribute to the bravery of the American soldier—a united North and South.

(To be continued.)

A MODEL CAMP.

Well-Deserved Tribute to a Germantown Organization of Sons of Veterans.

EDITOR NATIONAL TRIBUNE: I have always felt a keen interest in the progress and work of the Sons of Veterans, and I desire especially to call the attention of your readers to the Germantown, Pa., organization, which is one of the most patriotic camps in the country.

The camp has been active and progressive. Passing through many vicissitudes, it has yet been able to meet its obligations. Recently it has been the most patriotic centers of the Union, its membership is composed of men from all classes of society, chosen with a strict regard for probity of character and sterling loyalty to the principles for which their fathers made such noble sacrifices.

It is worth to-day \$2,000 and has over 180 members in good standing. From its inception it has identified itself with Post 6 in the observance of Memorial Day, taking full charge of one cemetery, Ivy Hill, near the city, and at all times to take up the entire work when needed. On a recent occasion they turned out in full force, with their guards and life and drum corps to pay the last honors to a noble soldier, an utter stranger to them all, Sgt. Harry Holt, of the 12th U. S. Inf., who died at San Francisco on his way to rejoin his brave fellows started eagerly forward, and brought to Philadelphia for interment.

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